

The Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees, and Travelers: Data Tool and Data Limitations

This data tool allows users to obtain information by archdiocese and diocese (arch/diocese) on select immigrant groups served by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, Subcommittee on the Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees and Travelers (PCMRT). Once a selection is made, the tool will produce a table that displays the number of individuals in the group by arch/diocese and their characteristics, including years in the United States, age, citizenship, gender, marital status, level of English proficiency, school enrollment, employment status, poverty, personal income, occupation, industry, and whether they live in a mortgaged home. Users can also download the data for subsequent use.

The populations in this dataset include: African immigrants, Brazilian immigrants, Haitian and Caribbean immigrants, European immigrants, the children of these previous four groups of immigrants, people of the sea, migrant farmworkers, and civil aviation employees.

To produce the estimates for this tool, CMS used 2017 1-Year American Community Survey (ACS) data. The ACS is a nationally-representative annual survey of roughly 3.5 million households that are randomly selected by the Census Bureau. It includes detailed demographic characteristics of foreign-born populations. Estimates are weighted up to reflect population totals using individual weights calculated by the Census Bureau.

Data Limitations

The US Census provides the most comprehensive demographic data available on US residents. However, this does not mean that certain populations of concern to PCMRT can be easily or fully identified in the ACS. At a result, the tool should not be used to provide exact estimates of these populations. Rather, it is intended to provide US bishops (exclusively) a general sense of where certain populations of concern may be found and their characteristics.

Some groups of interest to PCMRT could not be identified in the ACS, including **victims of forced migration**,¹ and **traveling show workers**.² In other cases, ACS variables did not exactly match populations of concern to PCMRT, as described below:

- **People of sea** includes fishing and hunting workers, sailors, marine oilers, ship engineers, ship and boat captains and operators, marine engineers, and naval architects. The ACS, however, cannot be used to identify dockworkers, cruise ship workers, and workers on oil rigs.
- **Children of immigrants** includes US-born persons of all ages with at least one parent born in **Africa, Brazil, Europe, or Haiti/The Caribbean** respectively. Due to data limitations, CMS is only available to identify children that resided with their parents at the time the survey was

¹ CMS has extensively reported on how 1.1 million of the roughly 3 million [refugees](#) resettled in the United States between 1987 and 2016 have fared over time, but information on these refugees – who constitute only a small percentage of forced migrants living in the United States -- is not available through this data tool.

² The following occupations in the ACS may roughly correspond to **traveling shows ministries**: truck drivers, locomotive engineers and operators, railroad brake, signal, and switch operators, railroad conductors, and yardmasters. These estimates do not include circus workers, performers, or race-track employees. The ACS also reports on some categories of workers that may be considered **people of the sea**, including fishing and hunting workers, sailors, marine oilers, ship engineers, ship and boat captains and operators, marine engineers, and naval architects. The ACS, however, cannot be used to identify dock workers, cruise ship workers, and workers on oil rigs.

implemented in 2017. In addition, **Haitian and Caribbean Immigrants** refers to individuals born in the Caribbean, but excludes Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands.

- **Civil Aviation Employees** includes aircraft pilots, flight engineers, flight attendants, air traffic controllers, airfield operations specialists, and aircraft mechanics and service technicians. Other civil aviation occupations within PCMRT's rubric cannot be identified using ACS data.
- **Migrant Farmworkers** includes agricultural workers and first-line supervisors of farming, fishing, and forestry workers. Other farmworker occupations of interest to PCMRT cannot be identified using ACS data.

In addition, some of the PCMRT populations of concern are so broad -- such as **European immigrants** -- that they may be less than useful.

Finally, the smaller the number of persons that fit into an ACS category in a particular arch/diocese, the *less* reliable the data. This is because ACS data is based on a survey of 3.5 million households in a country of 331 million persons. As a result, there may only be two actual people surveyed in an arch/diocese that fall into a particular category of concern to PCMRT, but they could be counted as 200 persons per the weighting methodology utilized by the Census Bureau. Conversely, nobody may be counted in the ACS in a particular arch/diocese, although there may actually be people in that arch/diocese that fit into a population of concern to PCMRT. In this case, the ACS and the CMS data tool would report zero residents in that category. For these reasons, the data tool should be far more helpful in Arch/dioceses with large populations of particular groups than in arch/dioceses with small numbers.

A further description of CMS estimation procedures, as well as a discussion of the plausibility of the estimates, is provided in [Warren \(2020\)](#).